

TRIALS EXPECTED AND CONQUERED

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*“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers,
they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire,
thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior:
I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”
Isaiah 43:2-3*

EVEN down to the present day, the Jewish nation has not been destroyed. It has been made to pass through fire and through water. The story of the persecution of the Jews, both in earlier and later times, would fill many volumes with the most harrowing details. Had they not been a people whom God specially ordained to remain as His witnesses until the Messiah comes again, they must have utterly perished from among the sons of men. They have been a people scattered and peeled, rent and torn, hunted and harried, yet they still exist.

For many a century they were equally abhorred by the heathen and the so-called Christians, yet they have lived on, and they will continue to live on until a new heart and a right spirit shall be given to them, and the Lord shall, in His great mercy, take away the blindness which in part has happened to Israel, so that they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. Then shall come the glory of the Gentiles, when more than the former glory of Israel shall be restored to her.

But brethren, every promise in the Scriptures, of a spiritual nature, which is made to the literal people of Israel, and to the seed after the flesh, is, according to the inspired teaching of the apostle Paul, yet more fully made to the seed of Abraham after the spirit, for all believers are his spiritual seed. Was he not the father of all the faithful, not of the circumcision only, but of them also who are uncircumcised, if they trust in the living God?

To us, then, as well as to the literal Israel, is this promise made, and to the church of God as a whole, will it be fulfilled, even as it has been fulfilled to her thus far. Her martyrologists have told us how often she has gone through fire and through water, but the floods have not drowned her, neither have the flames consumed her. At this time she stands in a wealthy place, her Lord has set her feet in a large room. Her banner still floats upon the breeze. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against her in judgment she shall condemn. For her there is a noble destiny. Her full glory is not yet revealed, but we know that when her Heavenly Bridegroom shall appear in His glory, His bride shall share in it with Him.

Yes, brethren, we, who believe in Jesus, are on the winning side, we are on the side which has God with it, and Christ with it, and eternity with it, and the appointed day shall reveal that this is the conquering side.

But further, this promise, while it applies to the whole church of God, also applies to every individual in that church, for it is a rule with the promises of God, that you may break them up as small as you please, but they will still be after the same fashion as at the first. Like certain crystals, which, if you break them again, and again, and again, retain the same crystalline form, which is their natural form, so a divine promise, that is true to the whole corporate body of the church, is also true to every one of

the members of that church, and true to every one of those members in every trial into which that member may be cast.

Take you then, this promise to yourselves, beloved. You who are in Christ Jesus, and who worship God in the Spirit, claim this promise as made to you, just as much as if God had spoken it out of the excellent glory right into your ear, or as much as if you saw Him writing with His own eternal pen, these precious sentences as a personal epistle to you, for He does speak them and write them to you by His ever-blessed Spirit.

On looking at our text, we see that it very readily divides itself into three parts. The first is this, *trials must be expected by believers*, you may have to go through fire and through water. But secondly, *trials will not be able to destroy you*. You have, in the text, the most express declaration that you shall neither be overwhelmed nor consumed. And thirdly, *of this blessed fact, we have the very highest assurances given to us*. They are found in the third verse of this chapter, where we have argument after argument to prove to us that God will be with His people, to deliver them when they are called to pass through rivers of trial or through fiery tribulations.

I. First then, TRIALS ARE TO BE EXPECTED BY BELIEVERS.

I suppose that some young Christians imagine that the favorites of heaven will never be tried, but it is not so. The first verse of this chapter bids us fear not, for God has redeemed us, and called us by our names, and we are His, and we might, therefore, draw the conclusion that we could live at our ease, enjoy all manner of luxuries, and as the chosen people of God, be protected from every wintry blast.

Beloved, it is not so, if you are heirs of the kingdom of God, you are also, most assuredly, heirs of tribulation, for your Lord has declared, “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” If you are soldiers in the army of Christ, you are not intended to win the victory without a conflict, and if you are ordained to wear a crown above, you are certainly equally ordained to bear a cross below. Grace does not bring luxury in its train, nor does it lull us into a sweet slumber, and carry us to the skies—

“On flowery beds of ease.”

No, we must fight if we would reign, we must suffer for Christ if we would be glorified with Him. Our text speaks about all this as if it were a matter of course, “When thou passest through the waters...and through the rivers...when thou walkest through the fire,” just as if we hardly needed to be told that it would be so.

Our text tells us that *these trials will be of various kinds*. We use the expression, “through fire and through water,” to signify a variety of severe trials. If you are a true child of God, you will have to go through the waters, you will have to endure trial of a certain kind which will chill you to the very marrow—trial which will seem to sweep you off your feet, take away from you your foothold, and carry you along with its rapid current, whither it pleases.

You must expect to have trials of that sort, and after you have endured them long, you must not delude yourself with the promise of relief, for when one trouble has gone, another will come, and it will probably be of a different character from the last one you had, and will require the exercise of another kind of grace and another form of watchfulness. Instead of being in the water, you will be in the fire, you will not be chilled now, but heated, like molten metal in a furnace, and the fierce flame will be all around you, alarming you, and filling you with dismay and distress.

It is a different trial altogether from any that you had experienced before. You know how in one day the wind often blows from quite opposite quarters of the compass, and how, in a few hours, we have, first snow, then rain, then sunshine, then wind, then snow again, then sleet, and I scarcely know what beside—a sort of epitome, in one day, of human life—yet a strange day, as most human lives are—a day one never wishes to have repeated, but is glad when it is over.

God's children would not wish to live their lives over again, and they are glad when they come to the evening, and can undress, and go to the place of rest, but in the meantime, if they are wise, they will expect a variety of trials to come to them.

And our text seems to intimate that *some of these trials will be very terrible ones*, "When thou passest through the rivers"—strong, rapid rivers, that come rushing down from the hills, like Kishon, the mighty flood which swept away Jabin and his hosts—deep, unfordable rivers perhaps, through which, nevertheless, you will have to pass—rivers which are like the Jordan, which overflows all its banks at the time of harvest.

There will come to you trials like these, and it will sometimes seem as if you never could get over them—as if, now, your Christian career must end, and end in failure, even as the pilgrim's course would end in drowning if, in attempting to ford a rapid river, he was swept away.

And if the flood is so terrible, what shall I say of the fire? It is the nature of the flood to overwhelm, but it is the nature of the fire to consume. There are certain trials that could overwhelm our faith, and speedily consume us if there were not a secret source of strength, divine, omnipotent, within our hearts, and round about us. If it were not true that "the LORD sitteth upon the flood: yea, the LORD sits King forever," the rivers would long ago have overwhelmed us, and if it were not that He makes the flaming fire to be His messenger, and the burning heat to be His servant, we should have been utterly consumed. But we shall not be, although the trial, if it could work in its own way, would have this result.

You may quite expect that between here and heaven, if you have not met with it yet, you will have enough trouble to destroy you utterly unless the Lord be your Helper. I suppose that the most of us can already sing with the psalmist, "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul." But because the Lord has been with us, therefore our adversaries have not been able to prevail over us.

Our trials have not only been varied and terrible, but *they have been many times repeated*. I do not think it is merely the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry which requires the reduplication of the sentences here, or if it be, yet even then we may suppose the poetry to be typical of the trials of the believer's life. We have to pass through the waters, and after that, through the waters again, only, this second time, it is called through the rivers. We are encompassed at one time, with fire, and by and by, the fire comes again, only this time, it is called flame, as if the fire raged yet more furiously. No, my young friend, you have not done with temptation yet, and not even with the temptation which you have overcome, for it may return in another form.

No, my brother, you have not seen the last of your corruption, not even of that corruption which you consider to be quite dead. You have not yet passed through all the trials which Satan will cause you, or which the world will cause you, or which the flesh will cause you. You will have to go through not merely one river, but many rivers, and through not simply one fire, but through many fires, before you come at last to God's right hand in glory. And this is sometimes the sharpest pinch of our tribulation, that, it comes upon us again and again.

We have all read, with great interest, the story of Job's many trials, and we have felt that the force of them was increased by the declaration of messenger after messenger, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." First, the oxen and asses were stolen by the Sabeans, and the servants that were with them were killed, then the sheep and their keepers were slain by lightning, then, the Chaldeans captured the camels and slew the servants in charge of them, last of all, came the terrible tidings of the death of all his family.

It was stroke upon stroke, sorrow upon sorrow, trouble upon trouble, and it is this repetition of trial that bows even a strong man down, and that makes the firmest believer begin to doubt and tremble. But beloved, you must expect wave upon wave, trial upon trial. You are not as a soldier, after having fought one battle, to take off your regimentals, and retire to your tent and say, "I have won the victory." That

battle is but the beginning of a long campaign, and you will have to endure the smoke and dust of the battlefield, and the garments rolled in blood, time after time, before the victor's wreath shall at last surround your brow. So, your trials will be repeated, as well as varied and terrible.

And mark you, according to the text, *these trials are inevitable*, "When thou passest through the waters." It is taken for granted that you have to go through them. There is no bridge, and there is no boat, by which you can pass over these waters, and no tunnel by which you can go underneath them, so you must go through them. Then it is added, "When thou walkest through the fire." There is nothing said about putting out the fire or about waiting until the flame burns low, or the embers begin to cool, no, you have to go through the fire and through the water.

You have not merely to dip your feet in the waves of trouble, you have to go through them. You have not merely to go, and just singe yourself a little at the flame, it is through the fire that you have to go, and that fire will be like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace when it was heated seven times hotter than usual. It is not a fire for you to warm your hands at, you have to tread those glowing coals—possibly, with bare feet.

Are you prepared to endure that fiery ordeal? Can you so trust in the living God as to feel sure that when you get into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, there will be with you one like unto the Son of God, who will preserve you by His gracious presence? God does not promise His people any immunity from trouble, in fact, He has foretold that they shall have trouble. As there is no royal road to learning, so there is no royal road to heaven.

*"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."*

Make up your mind that you have to go through these trials, and ask the Lord to give you grace and courage that you may be able to endure unto the end. These trials of the saints are appointed and ordained, and they have their destined end, so, depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will have more or less of them. If you have more, then you shall have the more consolation. If you have less, you may be grateful for the Lord's tenderness towards you, and not wish for more.

But rest assured that all God's children will be baptized with fire. He has had one Son without sin, but He has never had one child without suffering, all the sons and daughters of God are brought under the rod of the covenant, and are made to feel the chastising strokes of their wise Father's hand.

II. Now, secondly, I have to remind you that TRIALS SHALL NOT DESTROY BELIEVERS.

First of all, *they shall not divide believers from their God*. That would be destruction indeed, but it can never be. Notice the first sentence of our text, "When thou passest through the waters." But my Lord, will those waters roll between You and me? No, for "I will be with thee." Then, Lord, let them roll, for I can say, with the apostle Paul, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us?" asks the apostle, and the answer is, "None shall separate us," for God and His people are indivisible.

If I said no more, and sat down, there would be enough comfort, I think, in that thought, to make you ready to rush through floods and flames where Jesus leads the way. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with you." You shall not have less of God because you are poor, or because you are sick, or because your mother is taken from you, or your children are, one by one, caught up into heaven. Oh, no! In your losses, and crosses, and troubles, you shall realize the presence of God even more conspicuously than you have ever done before.

Our text does not say, "When thou shalt tread the flowery mount, and rest upon the soft green bank, I will be with thee." I never remember reading in the Scriptures, a promise of that kind, or one like this, "When you walk upon close-shaven grass, which seems like a carpet beneath your feet, I will be with

you.” No, but God says, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” He gives a special promise for a special time of trial, and to meet the doubt which has so troubled His child, He says, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”

Then our text tells us that *neither the waters nor the fires shall stop the believer’s march*, “When thou *passest through* the waters, I will be with thee.” It does not say, “When you get to the waters, you shall stop there.” They cannot stop us, we are to go through them. Our way to heaven lies through that flood, then, through that flood we will go. God has ordained that no troubles, however great, and no persecutions, however terrible, shall stop the onward march of a soul predestinated to eternal joy. Suppose it is a deep and rapid river, whose swollen torrent seems to sweep everything before it? We shall go through it, we shall neither be stopped by it, nor swept away by it, for the promise is, “When thou passest through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.”

But what about the fire? Can we get through that? Surely we are not fireproof, we wear no asbestos garment that shall preserve us from the devouring flames. Yes, brethren, you shall pass through the fire as well as through the water, our text implies that your march through the flame shall be quiet, and calm, and safe, for the Lord says, “When thou *walkest* through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.” There is no need to quicken your usual pace. If I had to go through literal fire, I should want to run and leap through it, but the believer is, spiritually, to walk through the fire.

That is a beautiful passage in the twenty-third psalm, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Walking is the pace at which men go when nothing distresses or alarms them. “He that believeth shall not make haste,” but shall walk even through the fire. What a blessing it is that, as no trouble shall separate us from God, so no trouble shall hinder our progress towards heaven, but through divine grace, whether floods or flames are in the way, we shall go through them!

Our text further says that *some trials, which threaten to overwhelm us, shall not be able to do so*, “The rivers...shall not overflow thee.” You may be carried off your feet, and have to take to swimming—the blessed swimming of faith, which casts itself upon divine strength, and spreads out its hands as the bold swimmer does. The water will sometimes, perhaps, be near your head for a minute, the spray will dash into your eyes, and the brine will be in your throat, but the waves shall not overflow you, however furiously they may rage around you.

There are some trials which seem as if they must crush the life out of those to whom they come. Possibly you are saying, “I do believe, but I am in such turmoil, that my mind seems quite upset. I am exceedingly sorrowful, almost to the death of my faith.” Ah! but it shall not be quite to the death of your faith, the floods shall not overflow you.

Other trials seem as if they would consume you, as if with fierce and burning vehemence, they would destroy you as a martyr burns at the stake. But what says our text? “When thou *walkest* through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” You shall not lose faith, or hope, or love, or patience, or any Christian grace, you shall come out of the fire as you went into it—nay, you shall be improved by the flame, for our text says, if we read it in the Hebrew, “When thou *passest* through the fire, thou shalt not be scorched, neither shall the flame burn thee.”

We remember that when those three brave witnesses for God came out of the burning fiery furnace, not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them. I think I see the Babylonians crowding around them and asking, in amazement, “Are these men alive? We saw the guards who cast them into the fire, consumed by the great heat of the furnace, and are these men alive who were actually in the midst of the flames?”

They had to come close and touch them, to make sure that they were not ghosts or apparitions. When they had grasped the hand of one of the three, to see whether it was alive, they next would want to examine it. But had not the fire scorched their eyebrows, or their hair? No, “the fire had no power; nor was a hair of their head singed.” They were just as they were when they went into the burning fiery furnace.

It was very full of wonder, and in like manner, the child of God, sustained by divine grace, will be none the worse for all his troubles. Look at Job after all his trials. The Lord gave him twice as much as he had before, and he was neither the weaker, nor the less honorable, for all he had been called to endure. Nay, he was a gainer by it all. O brethren, the gold loses nothing in the fire but what it is glad to lose! The silver in the crucible loses none of its real preciousness, it only loses its alloy. So shall it be with you beloved.

III. The latter part of our text supplies us with THE ARGUMENTS AND ASSURANCES WHICH GO TO PROVE THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE WITH BELIEVERS.

And the first is, "*For I am JEHOVAH.*" Ah, brethren, if you and I are trusting to anything short of the one living and true God, the rivers will overwhelm us, and the fires will consume us, but if our living faith rests on the living God, it is not possible for us to have reason to be ashamed or confounded, world without end. I ask without any fear as to the answer that may be given to me—Did any man ever trust in God, and find himself forsaken? Has it ever come to pass, in all the history of the church of God, that one single heir of heaven has had cause to be ashamed of his hope and his belief in his God?

If you rely on an arm of flesh, you will soon find it fail you. If you turn to idol gods, and earthly priests, they will all prove useless to you in your hour of trial, but it is not so with any who trust in the Lord. Have we not seen the saints on their deathbeds—ay, seen them in excruciating pain, and in deep depression of spirit? Yet they have never been ashamed of staying themselves upon their God. They have always found this to be an infallible protection in the time of their deepest need, "I am JEHOVAH."

Now, child of God, are you afraid of the fire, or are you afraid of the flood, when you have the self-existent, eternal, almighty, unchangeable God to trust to? O man, be afraid to be afraid, and fear to fear; but trust in God at all times, and with dauntless courage, go wherever He leads or points the way! It is the living God in whom you trust, therefore, when you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you, when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.

The next assurance lies in the words, "*your God,*" "I am the LORD thy God." Ah, the God in whom you trust is your own God, the God who, in an everlasting covenant, has taken you to be His servant, and has given Himself to you to be your Father, your Friend, your All in all—in a word, your GOD. Now, my dearest earthly friend may fail me, the choicest companion I have may forget me, but my God never will.

There is an enduring relationship which can never end in disappointment. "'I am thy God.' Yours, for I chose you; yours, for I redeemed you; yours, for I have taken you to be Mine, and I have made Myself to be yours in the covenant of everlasting love. Trust Me then, for 'I am thy God,' so I cannot forsake you. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'I am JEHOVAH thy God.' If I am nobody else's God, I am your God, so, 'when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame even scorch thee.'"

Now turn to the next words, "*the Holy One of Israel.*" When David wrote, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name," why did he select the holiness of God's name as the object of special blessing? If you sound the word a little differently, you will see that holiness is *whole-ness*, and that is one of its meanings. God is holy or whole. His holiness comprehends all His other attributes. If there were a failure in any one of the moral attributes of God, He would not be whole, or holy, but there is no such failure.

So, now, the whole of God—the holy God—guarantees to the believer that he shall be preserved in all perils and trials. You are not trusting to a God that can lie, or that can break His promise, for He is "the Holy One of Israel." You are not relying upon one who will divorce His people, whom He has espoused unto Himself, for the Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away. You are not trusting to one who, after all, will repent of what He has promised, and not fulfill it, for "God is not a

man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

The holiness of God is terrible to an unreconciled soul, but to a heart that is reconciled to God, the holiness of God's nature is a pledge that every one of His promises shall be kept, and that not one jot or tittle of all that He has guaranteed to His people shall fail to come to them. Look then, believer, at the guarantees of your safety which you have in the very nature of your God. Whether the rivers flow about you, or the raging seas roar in your ears, or the furnace pours forth its vehement heat, or the prairie is on fire all around you, you are at all times safe.

Then there is a further word of assurance, "the Holy One of Israel, *thy Saviour*." Now, to be true to His name, He must save all who trust in Him. Why does He call Himself the Savior, and especially put in the words, "thy Saviour," if He does not save, and save you? Come, believer, surely it needs no words of mine to draw out the force of this argument. If He does not save, He is not a Savior, and if He does not save you, He is not your Savior, but if you believe on Him, He will redeem His word—every iota of it.

As honorable business men meet their bills and notes of hand when they become due, so will the honorable God fulfill His word, and prove Himself to be the Savior of all who trust in Him. In six troubles, He will be with you, and in seven, there shall no evil befall you. He has promised to save you, and He will save you. He will rest in His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." That is His own word, and that word will be kept to the very letter. He is "thy Saviour."

The last assurance is, in some respects, the strongest of all, "*I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee*," by which the Lord means, "I will surely preserve you, because I have bought you at such a great price that I cannot afford to lose you. I have shown My valuation of you by the price I have paid for you, so you may rest assured that I will not suffer any harm to come to those whom I have so dearly purchased."

You remember that the Israelites were redeemed by the Egyptians being made to suffer. You recollect how the plagues thickened about the heads of Egypt's sons, and that Ethiopia and Seba were conquered by the Assyrian turning his forces against them instead of against the Israelites. And since then, it has often happened that God has succored His saints by allowing other people to feel the force of the sword which was turned aside from the godly.

When the poor persecuted Protestants of France or Piedmont were likely to be destroyed, it generally happened either that the kings of Germany and France fell out, or else that France went to war with Spain, and then the soldiers were recalled, and the poor saints had a little liberty. God had given other nations as a ransom for them, and so He will do again when it is necessary. He will blot whole nations off the map of Europe, or the map of Asia, or any other part of the world, for the sake of His people.

What cares He for them in comparison with His own chosen ones? In the olden days, He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel, and He will do the same for the spiritual Israel. All the world is but peel or rind, but His church is the sweet fruit. All the universe is only as the shell, but the kernel inside the shell is His own redeemed.

But in a higher sense, God has paid a far greater price than this for the redemption of His people—something infinitely more precious than Egypt with all her treasures, or Ethiopia with all her gold, or Seba with all her fragrance. Did He not give His Son to die for His people, and if Christ redeemed me with His blood, is not my safety guaranteed, not only against flood and flame, but against the very gates of hell?

Think you, beloved, that the death of Christ can be in vain? Do you believe that He bought with His blood some who, after all, shall be cast into hell? I know that there is a general aspect to redemption, which brings some good things to all men, but there is also the special aspect in it, which brings all good things to some men. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." He has redeemed us from among men. The good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. Christ said, concerning His disciples, "I pray

for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.” And did He really, specially, and with an eye to my salvation, lay down His precious life as a ransom for me, and shall God, after having given me to His Son, let me fail to come into the possession of Him who redeemed me with His blood?

I confess that I am unable to conceive of such a thing being possible. Once redeemed with the blood of the Son of God, who could again enslave the soul that has been thus set free? Go where you will, redeemed one, the blood-mark is upon you, and “the LORD knoweth them that are his.” According to the notion of some people, redemption does not guarantee salvation to anybody, but our text directly contradicts such a theory as that. It is because we are redeemed that we shall be saved, that is the reason why there are saints already in heaven, and why they will be there forever and ever. Redemption is the pledge of their eternal safety.

If Christ should lose any one of His redeemed—if God should lose any one of those who were so dearly purchased, what a terrible result it would be! Then, from the depths of hell, the blaspheming fiend would look up and cry, “Aha! here is a soul that was redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a soul that believed in Jesus, yet He could not save it from destruction. When it came to the river, it was drowned, or it was consumed by the fire. Aha! You call Yourself the Redeemer, but You have not redeemed this one.”

Now I am going to conclude my discourse by asking one or two questions. My dear brethren and sisters in Christ, have you not proved in your experience, that what I have been saying is true? I see before me, some who have been through fire and through water. The whiteness of their hair betokens that they have been pilgrims for a long while. You, my aged friends, have the snows of many a winter upon your brows, and the furrows of many a care are there also.

Well, what have you to say concerning your God? Has He ever failed you? You have had many sharp pinches, but has He ever left you in them? You have had heavy burdens to bear, but have they broken your back? You have had stern trials, but has your faith ever altogether failed? Brothers and sisters, I think we, who have had any experience in the ways of God, might stand up, and sing good Samuel Medley’s verse—

*“When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gather’d thick and thunder’d loud,
He near my soul has always stood,
His lovingkindness, oh, how good!”*

Then there is another question that I want to put. If the Lord has dealt with you thus up till now, what ails you that you should have any fear about the future? “Ah!” say you, “but I have not passed this way heretofore.” I know you have not, but then, all the way you have already trodden was new to you until you came to it, and the Lord helped you then. Why should He not help you now, and for all the future too? “Ah, but there will be changing circumstances!” I know there will, but there will not be changing promises. “Ah, but I find such frequent changes in myself!” Very likely you do, but do you find any change in the Lord? That is where your confidence is to be placed, in the Lord, not in yourselves.

Brethren and sisters, if you never doubt your Lord till you have just cause to do so, you will never doubt Him at all, and if you never have any mistrust of His goodness till He betrays your confidence in Him, you will never mistrust Him. Is it not a base thing on our part, to get down in the dumps so readily as we do, and to fret, and worry ourselves, the moment a little cloud appears in the sky? Let it not be so with us, let us who have believed, enter into rest, as our Lord intended that we should. We shall just as assuredly wear the crown of final victory as we have fought and won our first battle, for the grace that enables us to begin the conflict will never forsake us, but will help us to conclude the campaign, however long it may last.

So let us raise our song of holy confidence, and sing it all our journey through, for perhaps, the sweetness of our notes of praise may be heard by others, and may draw them also to go on pilgrimage with us, trusting in the Lord.

Last of all, what are some of you doing—you who never did trust in God? Well, you say, you have got on so far somehow. I cannot make out how you do it. If I had not a God to trust in, though I have many earthly comforts, I should be, of all men, most miserable, but I cannot understand how a suffering man, with a large family, and small wages, manages to live without God. I cannot comprehend how a hard working woman, with many children, and perhaps, a drunken husband, contrives even to exist without trusting in God. Oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear! Why, your life is not worth five minutes' purchase, I should not like to give you even a bad farthing for it, you do seem to have such a wretched lot.

Then, some of you, business people, with all your cares, and worries, and troubles—up early in the morning, and working till late at night, what is it all for? Saving a little money? For whom are you saving it? Who will have it when you die? Somebody, who will call you a fool for saving it, very likely. What are you other people living for? “Oh, we have our amusements!” Yes, yes, yes, I daresay, and wonderful stuff the amusements of the world are made of nowadays! Passing along the streets, I sometimes hear one of the songs that are being sung, and I cannot help feeling that the common songs that are sung in our streets, would be a disgrace to apes if they were to sing them, they are so meaningless and absurd, if not worse than that.

People sometimes ask me, “What sort of amusements would you have us go into?” I know they only do it for an excuse, so I answer, “You know what you like.” “Ah!” says one, “but I am a Christian.” Well, if you are a Christian, you will not care for the amusements of worldlings, you will count them as unclean, and not fit for you. I always say, “Let the dogs have their biscuits, and the cats their meat, and the hogs their wash, and let the worldling have his amusement, I don't want to rob him of it. It really is such poor, poor stuff, that they must be poor, poor creatures who can make themselves happy on it.”

A bag of wind—that is all the world's amusement is. When I hear how fashionable people spend an evening, and go away saying how delighted they were, I think they must have been out of the way when brains were being distributed, or else they would say, “Dear me, this is a wretched way of wasting time, I cannot endure it.” You have not anything, O you worldlings, even you who dwell in palaces, and ride in chariots, you who have great riches, you who have broad acres, you have not anything fit to feed a soul upon. It is all wind, chaff, husks, such as the poor prodigal could not fill his belly with, yet you eat it. How is that?

I do not understand you. I go back to what I said before. If I had all that my heart could wish for—I have that already, for I do not wish for anything more than I have in this world—but if I had all that my heart could wish for, supposing that it took to ambition and covetousness, yet should I be wretched without my God. I cannot live without Him. I would be like Noah's dove when it was flying over the wild waste of waters, I could not find a place where I could rest if I were to try to do so, I must go back to my Noah, to my ark, there is no other place of rest for me.

Poor soul, how is it that you think there is rest for you anywhere but in Christ? Come back, you with the weary wing, come back to God. Come back, you with the weary heart, come back to your Savior's bosom.

May God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.